

distinguished visitors from around the world through its social, economic, and educational diversity. This year, as the International Visitors Council held its Gala Celebration on May 18, 2001, they honored Melvyn J. Kates as Special Ambassador of Goodwill, for his outstanding dedication and support of the IVC mission.

Longtime IVC advocate and distinguished lawyer, Melvyn Kates has demonstrated remarkable commitment and support throughout the years to both the American and International communities. With an interest in social and civic activism, Kates has served his community well through positions as a Precinct Delegate of the 13th Democratic District, an Alternate State Central Committee Member, and with professional affiliation with the American Bar Association, the Michigan Bar Association, the Wolverine Bar Association and the Polish Bar Association. His hard work and leadership efforts have earned him several awards, among them the Office of Wayne County Executive Distinguished Service Award and the YMCA of Metropolitan Detroit's Community Service Award, as well as proclamations and tributes from the Detroit City Council, the City of Detroit Office of the Mayor, the State of Michigan House of Representatives, and the State of Michigan Senate.

As a Citizen Ambassador faithfully committed to the mission of the International Visitors Council, Kates has dedicated his time and talents to hosting meetings, fundraisers and receptions for Detroiters and honorable guests from around the world. Opening his home and his heart to international visitors from Europe, Asia and Africa, he has taken it upon himself to ensure that visitors leave Detroit with a positive impression of the city and its citizens.

I applaud the International Visitors Council of Metropolitan Detroit and Special Ambassador Melvyn Kates for their leadership and commitment. I know that Melvyn is honored by this recognition and I urge my colleagues to join me in saluting him for his exemplary years of service.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JUANITA MILLENDER-McDONALD

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 5, 2001

Ms. MILLENDER-McDONALD. Mr. Speaker, due to pressing legislative matters in my district, I will not be present for this weekend's series of votes. Please excuse my absence, and thank you for your understanding.

THE PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE AUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2002

HON. HOWARD COBLE

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 5, 2001

Mr. COBLE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce a bill to authorize the operations of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (PTO) for Fiscal Year 2002.

Patents, and intellectual property in general, have been part of American jurisprudence and our national economy since the founding of the Republic. George Washington signed a patent bill early in his first term as President, and Abraham Lincoln (himself a patent owner) was quoted as saying that the patent system "added the fuel of interest to the fire of genius." But for the most part, this subject matter—dry and arcane, the province of engineers armed with law degrees—has never inspired great interest for the public. In fact, I am hard-pressed to identify two words which are better suited to induce sleep in the average lay person than "patent law."

My good-natured jab at patent lawyers notwithstanding, Lincoln got it right, as he so often did. The Founding Fathers were prescient enough to understand that for the young nation to survive, its economy had to flourish. This is why our Constitution (Article I, section 8) actually includes provisions authorizing Congress to protect patent owners and their rights. More than 200 hundred years and six-million patents later, the economy and the country are the better for it. Our patent laws have enabled individuals and businesses to produce marvelous inventions that touch us in ways which we take for granted but which enhance the quality of our lives on a daily basis. For that matter, patents are the very life's blood of certain industries, as any biotech executive will acknowledge. Try raising a half-billion dollars in capital to bring a cancer treatment to market without patent protection for the underlying work.

Unfortunately, the PTO is not currently providing adequate service to individuals and businesses. Innovators must obtain prompt and reasonable evaluations from the PTO on whether they can acquire patents if they are to make sound business decisions. The PTO is now taking more than 25 months from filing to process a patent application to a patent, and the latest projections show it will take an average of 38.6 months by 2006. I am fearful that the agency simply does not have the resources that will allow it to provide quality patents, especially in such emerging areas as biotechnology and business methods. On top of these problems, the PTO has been unable to adopt the latest information technology that could allow it to provide better service to the public and more efficient patent and trademark processing.

If one accepts my point—that patents are vital to the sustenance of our economy—then I hope another point begins to resonate more forcefully among my colleagues. Since 1992, the U.S. Congress, with the participation of each Administration, has steadily diverted money out of the PTO to other programs. This practice imposes an unfair tax on inventors, because unlike most federal programs, the PTO does not receive stipend from the General Treasury. Instead, it raises all of the revenue needed to operate through the collection of user fees imposed on inventors who file for patent protection and businesses that file for trademark registration at the agency. In addition, the

The bottom line is that time is money in the patent world; and with more money, the PTO can issue quality patents faster, which means more investment, more jobs, and greater

wealth for American industry. The same is true for trademarks. When businesses develop new products or new brand names for existing products, early federal registration of the name, logo, or symbol is necessary to protect rights and avoid expensive litigation.

My bill would help to correct this problem by authorizing the agency to keep all of the fee revenue it raises in Fiscal Year 2002. At the same time, however, this authorization would still be subject to the availability of appropriations, meaning that the PTO must still convince the appropriators that the agency needs and will properly spend any extra funds. In addition, and consistent with this emphasis on oversight, the legislation sets forth two problem areas that PTO should address in the coming year, irrespective of its overall budget: First, the PTO Director is required to develop an electronic system for the filing and processing of all patent and trademark applications that is user friendly and that will allow the Office to process and maintain electronically the contents and history of all applications. Fifty-million dollars are earmarked for this project in each of Fiscal Years 2002 and 2003 for this purpose. Second, the Director, in consultation with the Patent and Trademark Public Advisory Committees, must develop a strategic plan that sets forth the goals and methods by which PTO will enhance patent and trademark quality, reduce pendency, and develop a 21st Century electronic system for the benefit of filers, examiners, and the general public.

Mr. Speaker, the Patent and Trademark Office Authorization Act of 2002 will allow the patent and trademark communities to get more bang for their filing and maintenance buck, while enhancing the likelihood that the agency will receive greater appropriations in the upcoming Fiscal Year. It is a bill that benefits the PTO, its users, and the American economy. I urge my colleagues to support it.

TWENTY YEARS OF AIDS

HON. MARK STEVEN KIRK

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 5, 2001

Mr. KIRK. Mr. Speaker, on June 5th of 1981, the first official report on Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome was published. Twenty years later, the AIDS pandemic has claimed the lives of more than 20 million people worldwide. In my home state of Illinois alone, over 15,000 people have perished in the last twenty years.

36 million people worldwide are presently living with HIV/AIDS. Nearly 70% of those reside in Sub-Saharan Africa. In Zimbabwe, one out of every four adults has HIV. The HIV infection rate in Asia will out-pace that of Africa within the next decade.

In Illinois, 35,000 people are living with HIV/AIDS. HIV infection is growing at an alarming rate among women and African Americans. The demographics of those infected with AIDS in Illinois mirrors that of our nation.

There is hope. Twenty years ago, surviving the AIDS virus was impossible. Today, people in developed countries can manage living with HIV, while it is still a death sentence in the developing world. In 1986, I suggested to Congressman John Porter that the U.S. Congress